

CRW 1301, SECTION 1651: BEGINNING POETRY WRITING

W, 9-11 \ MAT 0102

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COURSE DESCRIPTION AND GOALS

This course is meant to be an introduction to the reading and writing of poetry. The first part of the course will focus just on the reading aspect, and students will be assigned weekly writing assignments in which they will analyze how a poem and its author work with a particular poetic concept or technique. For the longer mid-term and final papers, students will apply their understanding of all these concepts and techniques to the analysis of two poems. The second half of the course will focus on the writing of poetry, though some readings will still be required. Students will be assigned weekly writing prompts. Students are expected to come to class prepared to discuss the assigned readings and the poems submitted by their classmates. In both parts of the course, participation will be crucial to the success of the class and to the student's individual performance. This is a General Education course providing student learning outcomes listed in the Undergraduate Catalog.¹

REQUIRED TEXTS

X.J. Kennedy and Dana Gioia, *An Introduction to Poetry*

Kim Addonizio and Dorianne Laux, *The Poet's Companion: A Guide to the Pleasures of Writing Poetry*

*Additional reading materials will be supplied by the instructor in PDF form. Students are expected to bring hard copy versions of these readings to class the day the readings are to be discussed.

ASSIGNMENTS

Mini Papers

During the first half of the course, mini papers will be assigned each week and will be due the following week. These mini essays are meant to help students practice making an argument about a particular feature of an assigned poem. Mini essays must include a direct response to the prompt in the form of an explicit thesis statement. The mini essays must also include supporting quotes and details from the poem, linking this supporting evidence back to the thesis. Essays

¹ For more information, see <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/advising/info/general-education-requirement.aspx#learning>

must employ correct grammar and punctuation, topic sentences, coherent paragraphs, and a clear overall structure.

Mid-term and Final Papers

Mid-term and final papers will have the same requirements as the mini paper, though they will make longer, more complex arguments about two assigned poems and a variety of poetic features pertaining to those poems.

Poems

In the last eight weeks of class, poetry prompts will be assigned each week and students will write poems in response to those prompts. These prompts will help students practice the techniques and forms taught in the first eight weeks of the course. Poems will be evaluated in terms of how well they execute the tasks set out in the prompts as well as the holistic creative and aesthetic quality of the poems themselves.

QUIZZES

Poetry Vocabulary

Pop quizzes on various vocabulary terms discussed in class will be given throughout the course. They are designed to both ensure that students complete the assigned reading and to review important concepts.

Memorization Challenge

During the second half of the course, students will sign up for a day on which he or she will recite a poem from memory to the class. The memorized poem must come from one of our textbooks or other assigned readings. The poem must be at least fourteen lines in length; if you wish to memorize a poem whose lines are on average only two or three words long and yet is at least fourteen lines long, please see me for approval. The purpose of this challenge is to allow students to wallow in a poem, to internalize its language and rhythm in the hope that the features of the poem will influence the student's own writing.

CLASS PARTICIPATION

Student Preparation

Participation makes up Students are expected to come to class prepared to discuss the day's assigned reading. Preparation entails that the student has thoroughly read the assigned poems and/or chapters and is ready to share his or her thoughts or reactions with the class. For workshop days, students are expected to come prepared to discuss their peers' work in terms of its strengths and weaknesses, as well as how it could be further developed or improved.

Class Discussion

As mentioned above, class discussion is the core component of this course. Active participation in class discussion is therefore a large component of a student's final grade.

Workshop Procedure

The workshop procedure for students is as follows:

1. Prompts will be distributed during class. Students are to spend the week working on drafts of their poems and are encouraged to come the instructor for any guidance in completing them.
2. Poems responding to those prompts will be due the following class. Bring enough copies for everyone in the class and two for the instructor. Poems must be submitted in hard copy and on Sakai.
3. Students are to read their peers' poems and make notes and comments on the strength and weaknesses of the poems. Comments must be written on the hard copy itself or typed up separately. These comments are to be returned to the author after he or she is workshopped in class.
4. The Friday after workshop I will send an email to the class listserv with a list of those whose poems will be workshopped the following class. Students are to come prepared to talk about these poems. Each student will get an equal number of workshops per semester.
5. At the start of the workshop, the instructor will tell the class the order of the poems being workshopped. The instructor will introduce each student and make a few broad comments to frame the discussion, though these are by no means boundaries for discussion. The instructor will then open the floor to a discussion of the strengths of the give poem, followed by a discussion of its weaknesses.
6. Students are encouraged not simply to offer comments that don't lead to further discussion but to engage in a conversation with their peers about the poem. This allows us not only to get deep into a poem but also give the author varying perspectives on his or her poem. Students who put effort into starting and maintaining a conversation will earn the most participation points.
7. A good way to start conversation is to explain *why* you think something about the poem is a strength or weakness. Use evidence from the poem and tell us how the poem's language might affect a reader's perception of it. It is not sufficient to claim to like or dislike something because it is or isn't to your taste—"just because" is not a valid reason for liking or disliking a poem. Rather, be ready to make a case for your opinion, doing your best to convince us that your view is justified. Someone will inevitably agree or disagree with your opinion; this starts the conversation.
8. Each poem will be discussed one at a time. While a student's poem is being workshopped, he or she may not speak. This policy exists for two major reasons: 1) by not speaking the author can better listen to what others are saying without having to think

about a response, and 2) the inability to respond to the critiques of others simulates the fact that most authors never have the opportunity to defend or explain their writing to their readers.

9. After some discussion of the poem's strength's and weaknesses, the instructor will then ask everyone to share their ideas about how the poem can be improved. Keep in mind that there is no poem that cannot be improved in some way or cannot be further developed.
10. Finally, we will wrap up by asking the author if he or she has any questions about anything that's been said during the workshop. This is the author's chance to ask a peer to clarify a comment or idea or to ask for advice for revision. This is *not* the author's opportunity to defend or explain his or her poem.

GRADING SCALE AND RUBRIC

Assignment Point Values

<i>Assignment</i>	<i>Points</i>
Introductory Essay (300 words)	20
Mini Essays (600 words) x 5	200
Mid-term Essay (1200 words)	80
Final Essay (1500 words)	100
Poems x 8	400
Take-home vocabulary & workshop policies exam	50
Participation	150
Total	1000

Grading Scale

A	4.0	93-100%	C	2.0	73-76%
A-	3.67	90-92%	C-	1.67	70-72%
B+	3.33	87-89%	D+	1.33	67-69%
B	3.0	83-86%	D	1.0	63-66%
B-	2.67	80-82%	D-	0.67	60-62%
C+	2.33	77-79%	E	0.00	0-59%

Rubrics

As stated earlier, poems will be evaluated in terms of how well they execute the tasks set out in the prompts as well as the holistic creative and aesthetic quality of the poems themselves.

Grading standards for essays are given below:

A: You did what the assignment asked for at a high level of quality, and your work shows originality and creativity. Work in this range shows all the qualities listed below for a B, but it also demonstrates that you took extra steps to be original or creative in developing a persuasive argument and style. Since careful editing and proofreading are essential in writing, papers in the

A range must be free of typos and grammatical or mechanical errors (papers with more than one or two errors cannot receive an A).

B: You did what the assignment asked of you at a high quality level. Work in this range needs revision; however, it is complete in content, is organized well, and shows special attention to detail and persuasive style.

C: You did what the assignment asked of you. Work in this range needs significant revision, but it is complete in content and the organization is logical. The style is straightforward but unremarkable.

D: You did what the assignment asked of you at a poor quality level. Work in this range needs significant revision. The content is often incomplete and the organization is hard to discern. Attention to style is often nonexistent or chaotic.

E: In most cases, students who earn this grade either did not attend class or did not complete the assignment.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Notes:

- KG# = Kennedy & Gioia, Chapter #
- PC = *The Poet's Companion*
- Readings and writing assignments should be done by the week under which they are noted

Week 1 – August 21

- Syllabus & Introductions

Week 2 – August 28

- **KG1:** Reading a Poem (paraphrase, lyric & narrative poetry)
- **KG2:** Listening to a Voice (tone, the person in the poem, irony)
- Introductory Essay: Introduce Yourself as Poet (or not) (300 words)

Week 3 – September 4

- **KG3:** Words (literal meaning, the value of a dictionary, word choice & word order)
- **KG4:** Saying & Suggesting (denotation & connotation)
- Mini Essay #1: Paraphrase Practice (600 words)

Week 4 – September 11

- **KG5:** Imagery
- Mini Essay #2: Diction & Implication Analysis (600 words): Donald Justice's "Mule Team and Poster"

Week 5 – September 18

- KG6: Figures of Speech (why speak figuratively?, metaphor & simile, other figures of speech)
- Mini Essay #3: Imagery Analysis (600 words): James Wright’s “A Blessing”

Week 6 – September 25

- KG8: Sound (sound as meaning, alliteration & assonance, reading & hearing poems aloud)
- KG9: Rhythm (stresses & pauses, meter)
- Mini Essay #4: Figures of Speech Analysis (600 words): Christine Marshall’s “Sweat”

Week 7 – October 2

- *PC*, “Writing and Knowing,” “The Family: Inspiration and Obstacle,” p. 19-29
- Mark Doty, *The Art of Description*, p. 13-44
- Mini Essay #5: Sound & Rhythm Analysis (600 words): David Wagoner’s “Thoreau and the Lightning”

Week 8 – October 9

- Due: Poem #1
- *Proofs & Theories*, “Education of the Poet,” p. 3-18
- Go over workshop policies (handout)
- In-class writing exercise & Mock workshop

Week 9 – October 16

- Due: Poem #2
- Due: Take-home vocabulary & workshop policies exam
- *PC*, “Repetition, Rhythm, and Blues,” p. 151-160

Week 10 – October 23

- Due: Poem #3
- Due: Mid-term Paper (1200 words)
- *PC*, “Meter, Rhyme, and Form,” p. 138-150

Week 11 – October 30

- Due: Poem #4
- *PC*, “The Family: Inspiration and Obstacle,” p. 30-38, “Images,” p. 85-93

Week 12 – November 6

- Due: Poem #5
- *PC*, “Voice and Style,” p. 115-128

Week 13 – November 13

- Due: Poem #6
- *PC*, “The Music of the Line,” p. 104-114

Week 14 – November 20

- Due: Poem #7
- *PC*, “The Energy of Revision,” p.186-192
- *Proofs & Theories*, “Disruption, Hesitation, Silence,” p. 73-85

Week 15 – November 27 (no class, but poem still due via list-serv)

- Due: Poem #8

Week 16 – December 4

- Due: Final Paper
- Conclusions

ABSENCE AND TARDINESS POLICIES

Given that this class is based in participation and class discussion and that we will only be meeting once a week, it is imperative that you come to every class or risk missing out on important information and insight. If a student is absent for more than **two class sessions** he or she will **fail the course**.

FINAL GRADE APPEALS

Students may appeal a final grade by filling out a form available from Carla Blount, Program Assistant [in the Department of English](#).

COMPOSITION CREDIT

This course can satisfy the UF General Education requirement for Composition. For more information, see: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/advising/info/general-education-requirement.aspx>

STATEMENT OF WRITING REQUIREMENT

This course can provide 6000 words toward fulfillment of the UF requirement for writing. For more information, see: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/advising/info/gordon.aspx>
Note: poems DO NOT count towards the 6000; only papers count.

STATEMENT ON STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

The Disability Resource Center in the Dean of Students Office provides information and support regarding accommodations for students with disabilities. For more information, see: <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/>

STATEMENT ON HARASSMENT

UF provides an educational and working environment that is free from sex discrimination and sexual harassment for its students, staff, and faculty. For more about UF policies regarding harassment, see: <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/sexual/>

STATEMENT ON ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

All students must abide by the Student Honor Code. For more information about academic honesty, including definitions of plagiarism and unauthorized collaboration, see: <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/honorcodes/honorcode.php>